

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For More Information Contact

Jayne Flowers (804) 864-7735

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OFFERS TIPS ON HOW PARENTS
CAN TALK TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT**

(Richmond, Va.)— Surveys conducted by the Virginia Department of Health's Center for Injury and Violence Prevention (CIVP) indicate that one in four women and one in eight men in Virginia have been a victim of sexual assault in their lifetime. To combat this issue, CIVP is encouraging Virginians to become involved in recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

"The Virginia Department of Health is committed to the elimination of sexual violence," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "Our research indicates that the majority of first sexual assaults in Virginia occurred when the victim was a minor. We want to assist families and communities to prevent the victimization of children."

CIVP offers the following suggestions to help parents when talking to their children about sexual assault.

- **Start Early:** You have the opportunity to talk to your kids first – take it!
- **Listen:** Find a place where there are no distractions, and try to time your conversation when you have plenty of time for discussion and reflection.
- **Initiate Conversations:** There are moments in everyday life which can be "teachable moments" or "talk opportunities". Take advantage of these opportunities to begin a conversation.
- **Encourage Problem-Solving Skills:** Teach your teen how to handle situations for themselves. Answer a question with a question to help your teen process on their own – asking, "How do you feel about that?" or "What are some solutions that you think might work?" enables children, particularly teenagers to think things through and come to their own conclusions.
- **Be Patient:** Let your child express themselves at their own pace so that they feel worthy of your time.
- **Keep the Communication Going:** As your child matures and faces new challenges, it's a good idea to have conversations about the same topics again and again.

CIVP has developed a video and companion brochure titled, "Talk to Me: Talking to Your Teen about Dating Violence and Sexual Assault." Parents may order the free video and brochure by going to www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence or by calling (804) 864-7735. The Web site also provides additional information regarding sexual violence, resource information, professional training and research findings.

CIVP works cooperatively with the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance and local sexual assault centers throughout Virginia. For crisis services, contact the Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238. For additional information about sexual violence prevention, visit www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence.

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